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courage is contagious

Viewing cable 06DAMASCUS1433, XXXXXXXXXXXX DISCUSSES LONG-TERM COOPERATION WITH

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06DAMASCUS1433**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06DAMASCUS1433	2006-03-30 14:15	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Damascus

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/10402>
<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/10403>
<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/10404>
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DE RUEHDM #1433/01 0891415
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 301415Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8022
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0726

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAMASCUS 001433

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

PARIS FOR ZEYA, LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/27/2016
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINR SY
SUBJECT: XXXXXXXXXXXX DISCUSSES LONG-TERM COOPERATION WITH
USG, SARG, XXXXXXXXXXXX

REF: A. DAMASCUS 1368
1B. DAMASCUS 1357

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4(b)/(d)
)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Key opposition figure XXXXXXXXXXXX met with Poloff on March 26 to discuss a number of issues. XXXXXXXXXXXX confirmed that he is not applying for MEPI funding during this application cycle, but remains interested in pursuing other, "indirect" funding mechanisms from the USG. XXXXXXXXXXXX detailed XXXXXXXXXXXX most recent interrogation with SARG authorities, during which time XXXXXXXXXXXX, XXXXXXXXXXXX. He also commented on recent events, including the Brammertz report and the formation of the National Salvation Front in Brussels, as well as discussing his own future political plans. He also called on the USG to work more closely together with the EU on human rights issues. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX NOT APPLYING FOR MEPI FUNDING THIS CYCLE, HAS LONG-TERM INTEREST IN ASSISTANCE: Key opposition figure XXXXXXXXXXXX met with Poloff in his office on March 26. During

discussions, XXXXXXXXXXXX made clear that he was not currently pursuing MEPI funding, nor is anyone pursuing funding on his behalf. XXXXXXXXXXXX also made clear that he is still interested in USG funding in the mid- to long-term, but only indirect support and at the right time. "We have time to discuss this," said XXXXXXXXXXXX and went on to make clear that this is not the right time. XXXXXXXXXXXX also raised again the fact that many of his fellow opposition figures are in dire financial straits. XXXXXXXXXXXX. (NOTE: XXXXXXXXXXXX noted that he himself is receiving approximately \$2000 monthly from his relatives, although his extended family has come under recent security scrutiny regarding this support.)

13. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX

14. (C) STATE OF THE SARG: NERVOUS AFTER BRAMMERTZ, BUT SHOULD NOT BE WORRIED ABOUT NSF: According to XXXXXXXXXXXX, the SARG has been acting very nervous of late "as if they're expecting something unusual." XXXXXXXXXXXX attributed this nervousness to the most recent Brammertz report, calling it "clever" for not revealing everything and "waiting for the right time." Brammertz is going slowly, and "one statement could explode everything." XXXXXXXXXXXX speculated that President Bashar al-Asad himself could be accused. (For more reaction on the Brammertz report, see ref A.)

15. (C) On the other hand, XXXXXXXXXXXX said that the SARG should not be worried about the new National Salvation Front (NSF) recently formed in Brussels (ref B). Former Vice President Abdulhalim Khaddam, one of the de facto co-leaders of the NSF coalition, along with Muslim Brotherhood head Ali Sadreddin Bayanouni, is hated by a large section of Syrian society, said XXXXXXXXXXXX. If Khaddam tries to lead the opposition, the movement will be unsuccessful as it would lack credibility. The MB, for its part, has more credibility and potential, but is not at present a major organized political force in Syria. The MB, said XXXXXXXXXXXX, is also not accepted by the (generally pro-regime) Syrian Islamist establishment.

16. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX FUTURE PLANS: XXXXXXXXXXXX plans to use the next two months to prepare for the launch of his party and to develop a party platform. He will be ready to announce it at "the right time" in about 6-8 weeks. The founding group will be

DAMASCUS 00001433 002 OF 002

more exclusive than originally planned, with a maximum of 12-15 people. When asked about the role of external actors in opposition politics, XXXXXXXXXXXX said it is important to focus on the internal opposition until the party is firmly established. This means no cooperation or partnership with the foreign opposition or foreign countries. He returned to his theme of wanting to form a bona fide establishment versus having a one-man show, noting that his current status as the central figure in the opposition continues to put him in danger. Forming a "real party" would provide "real protection" for himself.

17. (C) COMMENTS ON USG STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION: XXXXXXXXXXXX noted that the street is very anti-American at the moment, but maintained that the recent USG statement on the human rights situation in Syria was nonetheless a good thing. He noted that he continues to research and speak about the positive situation of Muslims in the U.S., trying to counteract SARG propaganda that the U.S. is anti-Islam. (NOTE: Post is working with XXXXXXXXXXXX office to provide him with articles and materials about the Muslim community in the U.S. END NOTE.) He encouraged the USG to issue joint statements with the EU, noting that European diplomats told him that their governments will start pushing the SARG hard on human rights issues within the next two weeks. He noted that the SARG still feels it has business connections with the EU, but with the USG there is "no hope."

18. (C) COMMENT: The relentless pressure and threats on XXXXXXXXXXXX and his family since his release seem finally to be having their expected impact for the SARG, forcing XXXXXXXXXXXX to lower his profile to the point of near-zero visibility. While he seems relatively confident that the SARG will come forward with a political parties law in the next two months, we are less sanguine XXXXXXXXXXXX His point that forming a political party will help shield him from SARG repression also seems debatable. XXXXXXXXXXXX is more persuasive when he points to Khaddam's lack of political support inside Syria, a point many of our contacts make, although some of the savviest among them refuse to dismiss Khaddam completely as an embittered has-been with no political future in Syria. XXXXXXXXXXXX case illuminates just how difficult it is for a potentially influential opposition figure to make any significant organizational or media move to increase that influence without arousing immediate repressive action by the SARG, including threats to do harm to family members. Given those dynamics, it is hard to see how the internal (secular) opposition will ever be able to pose much of a challenge to the regime. Islamist and Kurdish leaders have potential "street" power behind them that the secular forces lack. XXXXXXXXXXXX has the potential to make inroads among these groups, too, which explains why the SARG has subjected him to such intense pressure since it released him.

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